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ABSTRACT

A study to determine the relationship between feelings of self-esteem and style of communication involved 71 college students enrolled in a basic speech communication course and implemented an inventory of self-worth (ISW) developed to isolate internal feelings about self that would most likely be consistent across situations. The subjects completed the ISW and a communicator style questionnaire (CSQ). They had been involved in classroom group work for a semester and were also asked to rate each of the members of their five to seven person group using the CSQ. An analysis of the data indicated that self-reports of communicator style elements appeared to be a better indicator of self-worth than were rater's observations, that clear differences in communication style between low and high self-worth individuals were not observable by raters, and that conclusions cannot be drawn about a subject's self-esteem by observing communication style, or vice versa. (Data analysis in tabular form is appended.) (AEA)

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SELF-WORTH AND COMMUNICATOR STYLE:
WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP?

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This study was conducted determine the relationship between feelings of self-esteem and communicator style. Since the development of the measure of communicator style (Norton, 1977; Norton and Miller, 1975; Pettegrew and Land, 1975; Pettegrew, 1977), no study has empirically identified (1) the relationship of self reports of communicator style and feelings of self-worth, or (2) the relationship of raters' evaluations of communication style elements and subjects' self reports of communicator style.

Many researchers, however, proceed as if the relationship between self-esteem and communication style was evident. Studies concerned with the improvement of self-esteem often use training in communication skills to bring about presumed desired results (Anglin, 1976; Green, 1976). Two problems exist with this procedure. First, no profile of the style elements operant for high-esteem individuals has been determined, and, second, most of the instruments currently in use to "measure increases in self-esteem" measure a complex set of perceptions. Often, distinctions are not made between instruments measuring self-concept and self-esteem, although these should be considered as separate constructs.

A major difficulty inherent in research into self-esteem and self-concept rests in the confusion of the "self" terms. Raimy (1942) is said to have first used the term "self-concept." Maslow (1954) discussed "self-esteem," Lecky (1945), while

appearing to discuss a similar self-construct, referred to "self-consistency." Other widely used "self" terms include "self-acceptance" (Allport, 1961), "self-actualization" (Goldstein, 1940; Maslow, 1954), and "self-identity" (Erickson, 1959). Wylie (1961) said, "the terms are so intertwined and overlapping in the literature that the constructs must be discussed as a group" (p. 40).

Some consistency among definitions can be found upon examination. Calhoun and Morse (1977) report

The self-concept is the substantive description one employs to identify his nature . . . Shortly after a child becomes aware of his "self" (usually when he begins to employ expressions such as "I" "me" or "mine") he learns from experiences encountered through social interaction with parents, siblings, relatives, or peers what he can or cannot do. . . . The amount of success encountered during this early developmental stage will determine how positive the self-concept will be. (p. 319)

The self-concept, then, may be seen as a descriptive concept of the self which includes physical, mental and behavioral components.

While self-concept is believed to be developed before the age of five and to remain relatively constant (Jongeward and James, 1973; Perkins, 1975; Wylie, 1961), self-esteem is developed later and tends to vary situationally. Self-esteem was concisely defined by Calhoun, Warren and Kurfiss (1976) as "the individual's satisfaction with the self-concept." The self-esteem then incorporates a judgmental element, the assessment of the self-concept relative to a number of situations. One of the widely used self-esteem measures is the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory. It is divided into five subtests: (1) general self; (2) social; (3) home; (4) school; and (5) a

lie scale. Excluding the lie scale, the total of the other subjects gives a global self-esteem score.

For the purpose of this study, a still more restrictive measure of self-esteem was constructed by the authors. This instrument utilized those self-esteem items related to a general feeling of self-worth, while eliminating specific external situational factors as much as possible. The new scale was developed to isolate those internal feelings (gut feelings) about self which would most likely be consistent across situations.

Methods

The specific focus of this study was on the relationship of inner feelings of self-worth and communicator style. To develop an instrument to measure self-worth, the researchers examined the more predominant self-concept and self-esteem measures and selected items that seemed to be specifically related to general feelings of self-worth. Fifty-three items were selected. These items were then evaluated by the three researchers to determine how adequately each item related to the construct in question. Items were selected only when 100% agreement among researchers was attained. This resulted in a list of 20 items which directly related to feelings of self-worth. A six point, Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree followed each question. Testing and refinement resulted in an 18 item questionnaire which was then examined using the Purdue Instrument

Analysis Sytem, PIAS (Porter, 1978). The more significant findings obtained by the PIAS program are as follows:

Alpha Reliability	= .84
Percent of Shared Variance	= 70.587
ANOVA Reliability	= .82
Reliability for a Given Item	= .20
Spearman-Brown Prophecy Reliability	= .82
Unbiased Reliability Estimate	= .80
Average Inter-Item Correlation	= .23
Average Correlation of Items with Total Instrument	= .52

The Inventory of Self-Worth (IS-W) appeared to be sufficiently reliable to proceed with its use.

Procedures

Seventy-one college students from a basic course in speech communication completed the IS-W and a communicator style questionnaire (CSQ), a modification of the Norton short form. The CSQ asked subjects to evaluate themselves on friendly, contentious, open, dominant, dramatic, and relaxed dimensions, as well as on overall communicator style. The subjects were assured that the responses would be held in strict confidence, data would be analyzed as group data and no individuals would be singled out.

The perceptions other people had of the subject's communicator style were obtained by peer ratings. All of the students had been involved in a work group during the semester and the students were asked to rate each of the members of

their five to seven person group using the communicator style instrument. The ratings given each subject were averaged to obtain a mean score on each style dimension for each subject. All of the subjects in the study, therefore, had a self-worth score, self-reported scores on seven communicator style dimensions and scores of how they communicate based on raters' perceptions on each of the same seven dimensions.

Data Analysis

Several methods of analysis were used to determine the relationship between an individual's feelings of self-worth and style of communication as self-reported and as observed by others. Among them were Pearson correlation, a Stepwise Multiple Regression using self-worth as the dependent variable and a one-way analysis of variance to see if low, medium or high self-worth individuals differ significantly on the communicator style variables. Furthermore, after obtaining group scores on self-reports and perceptions of others, the disparity in these scores was examined to determine if high, medium or low self-worth subjects perceived themselves differently. The low group consisted of all subjects whose self-worth scores fell below the 25th percentile. The high group consisted of those subjects scoring above the 75th percentile, and those subjects whose self-worth scores fell in the middle formed the medium group.

There is a caution with using disparity scores that should be mentioned. If there is not a clear pattern between how the low, medium and high groups perceive themselves compared to others' ratings, the mean disparity scores for the groups will tend to regress towards 0. This may be interpreted to mean that the subjects in a particular self-worth group are perceiving themselves the same as others do. This conclusion may be misleading. It can be assumed, however, that if a group has a fairly strong positive or negative mean difference score, the members of the group on the average are over perceiving or underperceiving their styles, compared to the raters' perceptions.

The Student-Newman Kuels range test was used with all of the one-way analyses of variance results, when appropriate, to locate the source of differences between groups. This test is appropriate with uneven N sizes. It uses different range values when comparing different size subsets. When two groups are compared, the range value for which they must differ at the .05 level of significance is 2.84. When all three groups are compared, they must differ by the value of 3.40 to be judged significantly different from each other. A final analysis performed on the data employed one of Tukey's (1977) smoothing procedures. An advantage of smoothing is that it enables researchers to see and understand underlying patterns and relationships between variables that may not be brought forth by other more conventional methods of analysis. The

3R method was the specific procedure used in this study. Numbers are considered in batches of 3 and the median is taken each time to represent a new sequence of numbers. This method progresses through the data until all ordered combinations of 3 numbers are smoothed. This technique is then repeated on the new sequence of numbers.

The two best predictor variables of self-worth were smoothed and graphed. The self-worth scores were arranged from low to high along an X axis. The smoothed scores for the best predictor variables were plotted along a Y axis. In the case that two subjects had the same self-worth score, their communicator scores were averaged and then smoothed.

Results

The Pearson correlations are shown in Table I. The subjects' self-perceptions of their communicator style have a stronger relationship to self-worth than do the raters' perceptions. All of the self-reported dimensions except Contentiousness correlate with self-worth beyond the .05 criterion level of significance. On all seven dimensions the correlation between the raters' perceptions of the subjects' communicator style and self-worth were not as strong. Only the Dominant style, as perceived by raters, reached the level of significance.

The results of the Multiple Regression analysis are shown in Table II. Self perceptions of the Friendly, Relaxed and Open styles are the three best predictors of self-worth. They account for 31% of the observed variance, and produce a

multiple R of .56. The raters' perceptions are somewhat difference. Dominance and overall communicator style are the better predictors of self-worth; however, they yield a multiple R of .39 and only explain 15% of the variance.

The one-way analysis of variance using the college students' self perceptions showed that there are significant differences between low, medium and high self-worth individuals on the Friendly, Dramatic, Open and Relaxed styles, as well as overall communicator style. These results are illustrated in Table III. There were no significant differences between groups on the Contentious and Dominant styles.

For the Friendly style, the low self-worth students differed significantly from both the medium and high self-worth students. The high and medium self-worth individuals saw themselves as being more friendly than did the low group. This same pattern also holds for the Dramatic style. The high and medium self-worth individuals saw themselves as being more dramatic than did the low students.

For the Open style, the high self-worth group was significantly different from the low and medium groups. High self-worth individuals saw themselves as being more open than did the low and medium self-worth students. The difference between the high individuals and the other two groups also held true for the Relaxed dimension and for overall communicator style. The high self-worth students saw themselves as being more relaxed, and as better communicators than did low and medium individuals.

The one-way analysis performed on the raters' perceptions of the college students revealed that there were no significant differences between the low, medium and high self-worth groups on any of the communicator style dimensions. The differences among these three groups are differences in self perception, and not differences perceived by other people.

The one-way analysis performed on the disparity scores between the students' self perceptions and the raters' perceptions of them show that the three groups differ significantly on the Friendly, Open and Relaxed styles, as well as on overall communicator style. These differences are graphed in Table IV. On the Friendly style, the low self-worth group significantly differed from the high group. The high self-worth individuals perceived themselves as being more friendly than others saw them, while the low self-worth students saw themselves as less friendly than others rated them. Both groups misperceived, according to the raters, but in different directions.

For the Open style, the high self-worth group differed from both the low and medium groups. High individuals saw themselves as more open than others rated them, while low and medium self-worth students saw themselves as less open than others rated them. This same pattern occurred for the Relaxed style and for overall communication style. The high self-worth students saw themselves as more relaxed and as better communicators than others saw them. The low and medium groups saw themselves as less relaxed than others rated them. The raters also indicated that the individuals in these two groups are better communicators than the students rated themselves as being.

The Tukey smoothing analysis was performed on the two variables that were the best predictors of self-worth--the self perceptions of the students on the Friendly and Relaxed styles. Table V shows the graphs of the second analysis, based on smoothing. The raters' perceptions were also smoothed and graphed along with the students' self perceptions on these two variables. Table V enables the reader to better visualize the relationship between how the three groups see themselves, and how others rated them. Viewing these graphs shows that the students' own perceptions of their Friendly and Relaxed styles gradually increased in a somewhat linear fashion as self-worth scores moved from low to high. The raters' perceptions, on the other hand, stayed fairly stable.

The low self-worth students rated themselves lower on both styles than the raters rated them; however, this disparity decreased through the medium range. On the Friendly style, the higher students rated themselves higher than did the raters, while they stayed closer to the raters on the Relaxed style.

Discussion

Self-reports of communicator style elements appear to be a much better indicator of self-worth than are rater's observations of communicator style. Results indicate that conclusions about a subject's self-esteem based on observed style elements would be suspect, and there is a high probability of inaccurate assessment. Indications were that clear differences in communication style between low and high self-worth individuals were

not observable by raters. One cannot draw accurate conclusions about a subject's self-esteem by observing communication style, or vice versa. There was no indication that an improvement in any of the style elements would produce a corresponding improvement in feelings of self-worth, and conversely, improved feeling of self-worth did not necessarily produce increased ratings in communicator style.

This study does illustrate the problems of overlapping constructs in feelings of self-worth and topics based on self-report instruments, such as the measure of communicator style. In this case, the self-report measure apparently gave more information about the subject's feeling of self-worth than it did about observable styles of communication. The problems inherent for researchers are obvious. If one wants to know how well subjects communicate, asking them may be a poor way to gain valid information.

One interesting finding deserves further research. Raters occasionally indicated that low self-worth individuals had better communication skills than did subjects with high self-worth scores. It is possible that by the time individuals reach college, certain communication skills have been developed as a masking device. More research is needed to test this hypothesis, but if true, it could mark a reversal of the stereotype of communication patterns for high and low self-esteem individuals.

TABLE I

PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS

Subject's Perception of Their Own Communicator Style

	<u>Friendly</u>	<u>Contentious</u>	<u>Open</u>	<u>Dominant</u>	<u>Dramatic</u>	<u>Relaxed</u>	<u>Comm. Style</u>
Self-Worth	.48*	.04	.36*	.27*	.23*	.34*	.31*

*Beyond the .05 level of significance

PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS

Rater's Perception of Subject's Communicator Style

	<u>Friendly</u>	<u>Contentious</u>	<u>Open</u>	<u>Dominant</u>	<u>Dramatic</u>	<u>Relaxed</u>	<u>Comm. Style</u>
Self-Worth	.06	.07	.09	.21*	.09	-.06	-.06

*Beyond the .05 level of significance

TABLE II

STEPWISE MULTIPLE REGRESSION

Self-Worth and Subjects' Perceptions of Themselves

<u>Step</u>	<u>Variable</u>	<u>F to Remove</u>	<u>Significance</u>	<u>Multiple R</u>	<u>R Square</u>
1	Friendly	20.732	.000	.481	.231
2	Relaxed	4.561	.036	.529	.280
3	Open	3.430	.068	.561	.314
4	Dramatic	.788	.378	.568	.323
5	Comm. Style	.238	.627	.570	.326
6	Dominant	.141	.709	.571	.327
7	Contentious	.073	.708	.572	.327

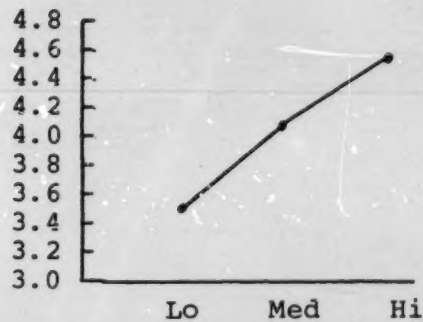
STEPWISE MULTIPLE REGRESSION

Self-Worth and Raters' Perceptions of Subjects

<u>Step</u>	<u>Variable</u>	<u>F to Remove</u>	<u>Significance</u>	<u>Multiple R</u>	<u>R Square</u>
1	Dominant	3.323	.073	.214	.046
2	Comm. Style	8.337	.005	.387	.150
3	Friendly	.956	.332	.403	.162
4	Open	.274	.602	.407	.166
5	Dramatic	.355	.553	.412	.170
6	Relaxed	.035	.853	.413	.171
7	Contentious	.035	.852	.414	.171

TABLE III
SELF PERCEPTIONS

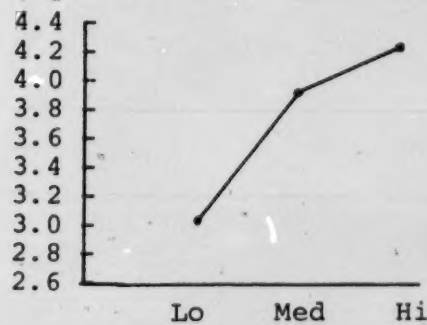
Friendly
Style



	Lo	Med	Hi
Lo	X	.65*	1.00*
Med		X	.35
Hi			X

Mean
Difference

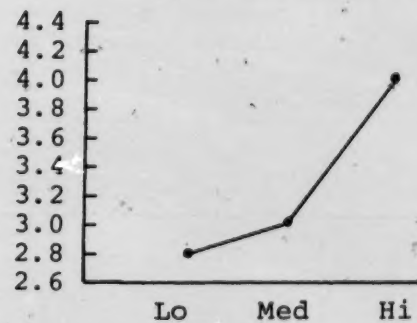
Dramatic
Style



	Lo	Med	Hi
Lo	X	.90*	1.15*
Med		X	.25
Hi			X

Mean
Difference

Open
Style

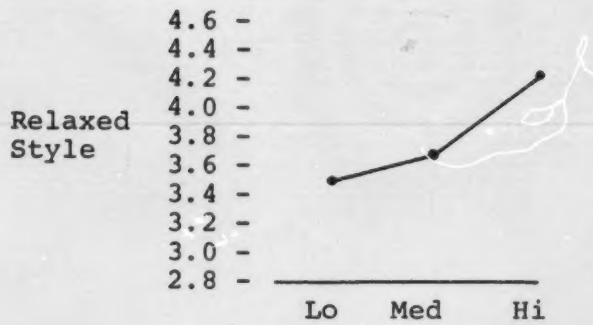


	Lo	Med	Hi
Lo	X	.36	1.25*
Med		X	.89*
Hi			X

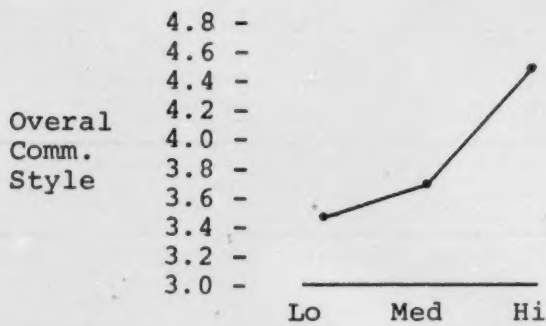
Mean
Difference

*Groups that differ beyond the
.05 level of significance

TABLE III CONTINUED



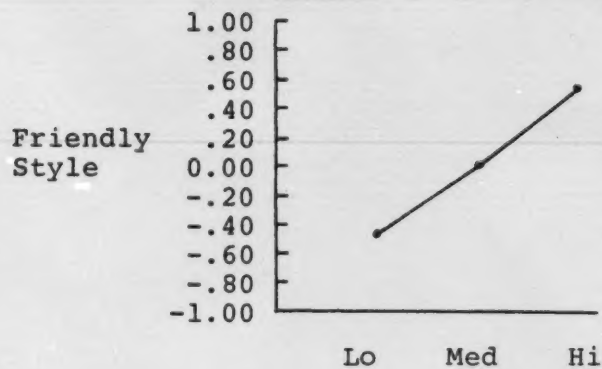
	Lo	Med	Hi	
Lo	X	.16	.93*	Mean Difference
Med		X	.56*	
Hi			X	



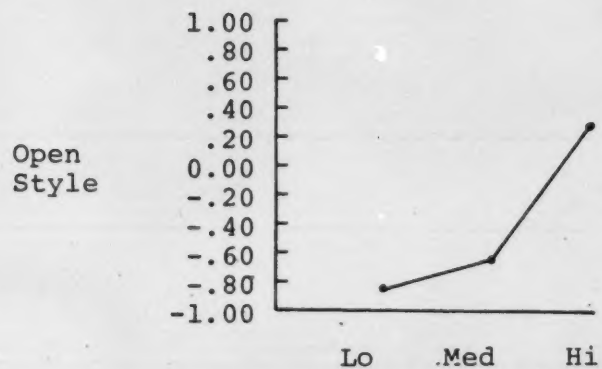
	Lo	Med	Hi	
Lo	X	.11	1.05*	Mean Difference
Med		X	.94*	
Hi			X	

*Groups that differ beyond the .05 level of significance

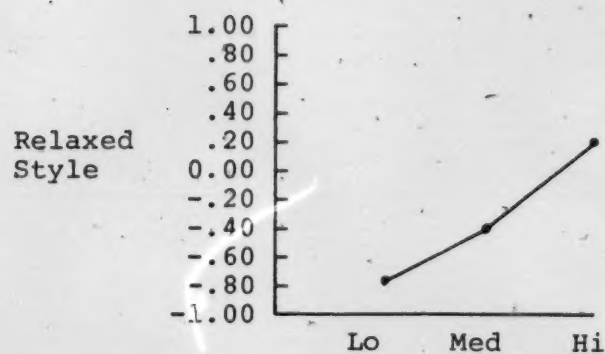
TABLE IV
MEAN DISPARITY SCORES BETWEEN SUBJECTS'
SELF PERCEPTIONS AND RATERS' PERCEPTIONS



	Lo	Med	Hi	
Lo	X	.52	1.00*	Mean Difference
Med		X	.48	
Hi			X	



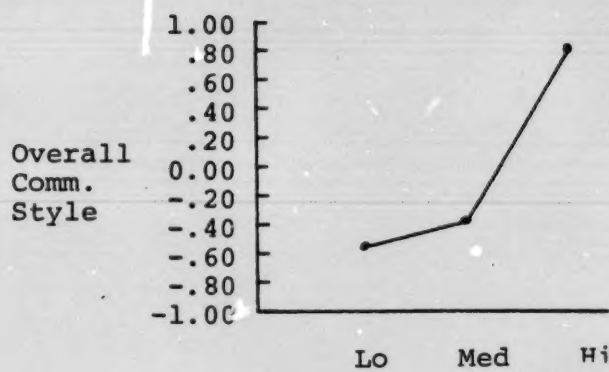
	Lo	Med	Hi	
Lo	X	.16	1.19*	Mean Difference
Med		X	1.03*	
Hi			X	



	Lo	Med	Hi	
Lo	X	.37	1.09*	Mean Difference
Med		X	.72*	
Hi				

*Groups that differ beyond the .05 level of significance

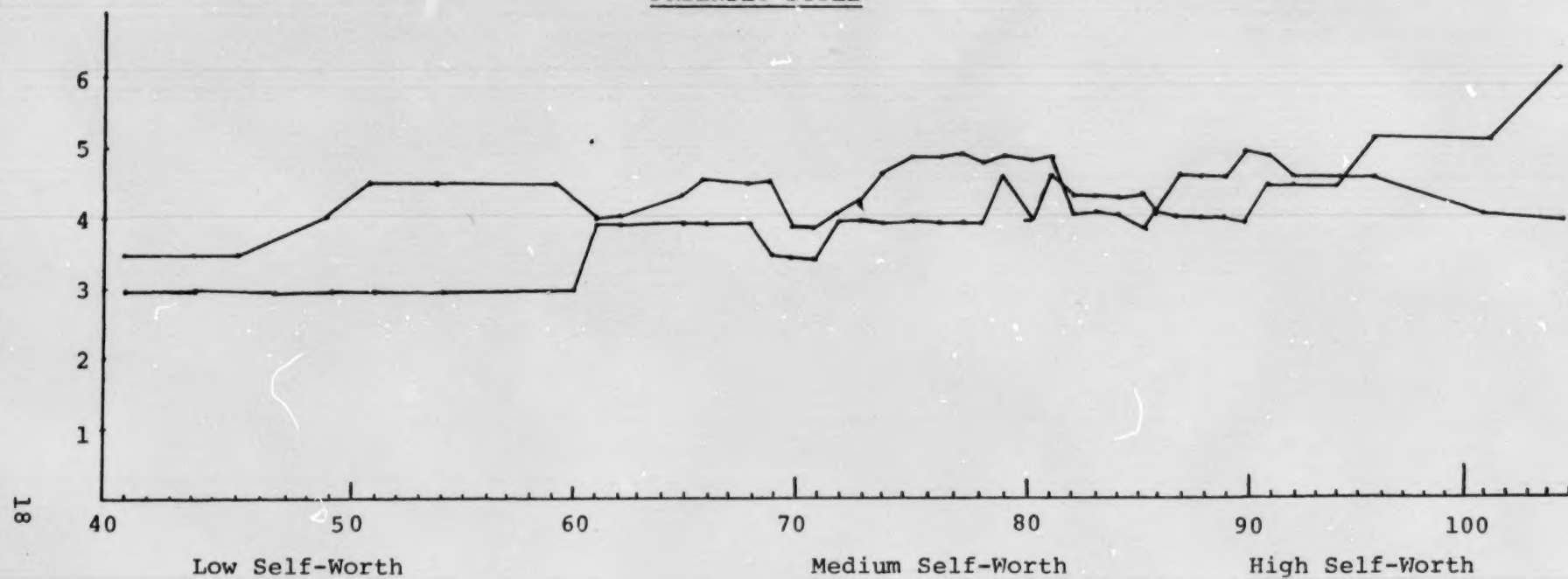
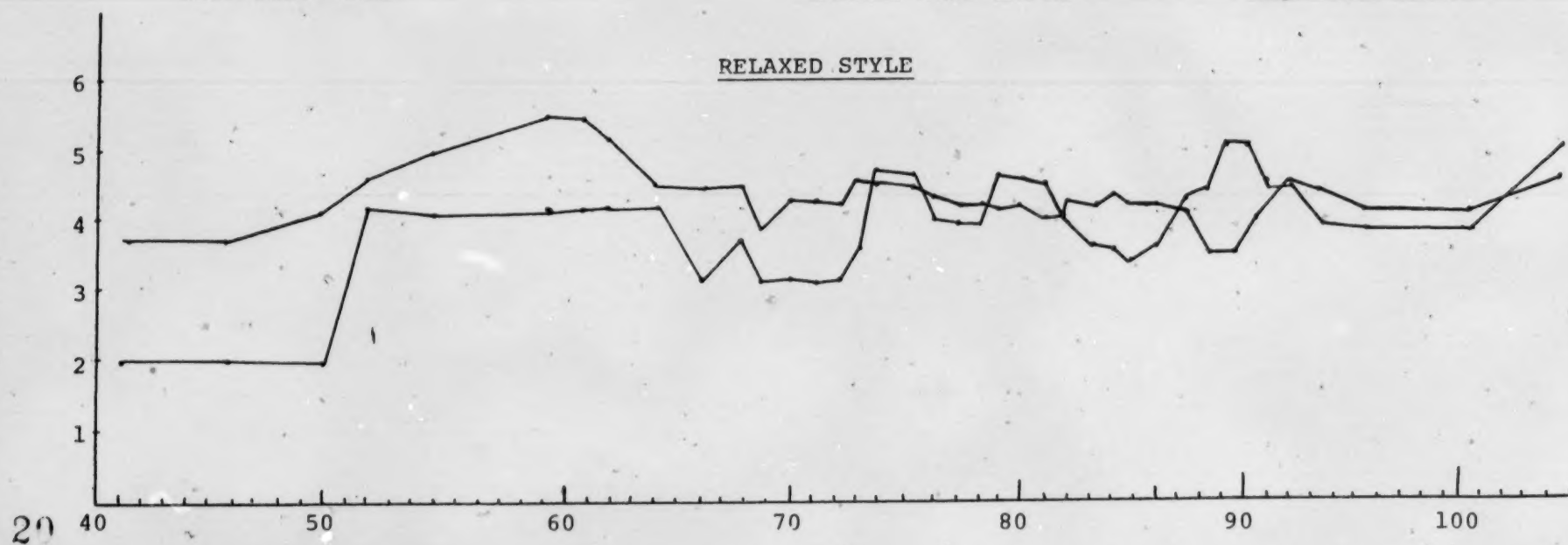
TABLE IV CONTINUED



	Lo	Med	Hi	
Lo	X	.15	1.32*	Mean Difference
Med		X	1.16*	
Hi			X	

*Groups that differ beyond the .05 level of significance

TABLE V

FRIENDLY STYLERELAXED STYLE

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